181 the emphasis on frequency and intensity of kin relations; the dichotomy between "rustic peasant" and "great man - noble" personality (the latter constituting a culture goal; Amhara concepts of government administration; religious fundamentalism and literalness; and last, healing of "spirit ailments" outside the officially dominant religion.

181 Attachment to the land is a major preoccupation of all Amhara:
423 Nobles and "gabbar" serfs, men and women, old and young, priest and
571 student, even of the townspeople. The complexity of land tenure (i.e. the varieties of "rest" and "gult" land) is closely connected with the social status of the residential kin group; the life cycle of the individual is largely determined by the land tenure of his family, beginning with the very kind of education he is likely to receive. By extension, a person's secondary social group consists largely of persons inhabiting or stemming from the same "agäre" (lit. my countryside), the sub-district where his family owns land or works on it.

181 Attachment to one's kin group is nearly as strong on the in-
602 dividual's maternal side as on the paternal. The greater emphasis
[591 on the latter is largely due to the predominantly patrilocal resi-
611] dence, and on patrilineal descent. Kin visiting is a primary social duty, on both the individual's paternal and maternal sides, with equal frequency and intensity. By extension, though with lesser frequency and intensity, visiting of affinal relatives, notably the wife's parents who nearly always live in another hamlet, is considered an important social duty.

Kin feuds often last for generations, particularly between land owning ("rest" tenure) kin groups. The fear of shaming ("harerät")

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



*zamad* is highly subjective, and all constellations of *zamad* reflect the interests and affections of ego. For the quality of kinship can be attributed to persons who are not consanguineal relatives, and this is done without resorting to fictions of affiliation. The term *wondam*, for example, meaning "brother," is simply applied to any male person of about the same age to whom one feels closely attached. The term *zamad* itself is applied to anyone to whom one feels a close personal tie—even to a mere fellow-countryman whom one happens to meet in a distant region. It is thus not taking too great a liberty to translate the term *zamad* as "close ones."

The primarily subjective nature of the circle of *zamad* derives not only from the fact that it includes friends as readily as actual blood relatives. Within the bounds of consanguinity, the composition of the kin group with which a person identifies fluctuates according to his current needs, particularly with respect to land use rights. As Allan Hoben has demonstrated, corporate descent groups are important among the Amhara in that rights to land use are allocated on the basis of hereditary claims possessed by such groups; but the fact that in this ambilineal descent system each individual may claim multiple active affiliations, and enjoys a relatively wide range of choice, means that the particular corporate descent group with which an individual affiliates in order to claim his rights varies according to what land is subject to disputation. He may claim land via his father, his mother, or his children (through their mothers' rights), and in each case may trace descent back to a variety of apical ancestors.[9]

The next most inclusive sociological concept beyond the ego-oriented circle of *zamad* is that of *agar*, or "homeland."* The co-residents of one's *agar*, like those who comprise one's circle of *zamad*, are regarded as forming an important "in-group," outside of which all other persons are a priori rejected. Yet the Amharic concept of homeland, like that of kin, does not refer to a fixed social entity; its referent varies according to the context in which the individual chooses to use it. Thus, as we have seen, the concept of *agar* may be used to refer to one's parish, district, province, or even nation.

A more specialized dichotomy of some prominence in the outlook of the Amhara peasant hinges on variation in the altitude of homelands. Inhabitants of lowlands (*qolaññā*) and dwellers of higher regions (*dēgaññā*) tend to be conceived as polar cultural types. Different sets of habits and traits are attributed to them. Thus, according to one set of stereotypes, the *qolaññā* is viewed as a heavy drinker and hot tempered, while the *dēgaññā* is viewed as a heavy eater and inclined more to litigation than to violence. Again, the

* The less prominent category of *wogen* is intermediate between these two. *Wogen* has a primarily political connotation; it consists of one's consanguineal and affinal kin, friends and close retainers, all who may be mobilized in the event of political or military competition.

11:Levine Z-4.5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



permissive rather than prescriptive, and the degree to which individual rights are protected against the demands of collectivities.

In pursuing this analysis we shall examine in turn the three main institutional orders which were structurally differentiated in Amhara society: the kinship system, the church, and the military-political system. In conclusion we shall discuss some more general features of social organization among the Amhara which relate to the question of individual independence.

*Kinship*

A base line of social constraint among the Amhara is provided by the obligations inherent in their family system. The husband must work to provide food and to defend the boundaries of the family land against all comers. The wife must care for all that transpires within the home compound—preparing of food, fetching water, caring for infants, spinning cotton, tending the fire—and must avoid sexual relationships with other men. The children must tend the flocks, do other work chores, and generally obey the slightest command of any of their elders. Neglect of any of these basic obligations brings sharp reprisals: divorce of the husband, beatings of the wife and children.

Obligations toward the parents persist, moreover, long after the children have married and established families of their own. Young married men are supposed to contribute one or two days a week to working their fathers' land, and to assist them in time of litigation. They are obliged to care for their parents when the latter have become too old to provide for themselves, an obligation sometimes discharged on a rotating basis among the surviving children. There is also a solemn obligation for the children to arrange the appropriate memorial feasts (*tazkär*) following the death of a parent, especially the one that is due on the fortieth day after death.

Adolescent children are subject to the will of their parents with respect to choice of a spouse, and youths are expected to follow their fathers' wishes in connection with adult work roles. Threat of disinheritance is the powerful consideration that underpins these constraints. For their part, the parents are obliged to keep their land in the family. They may not sell it to outsiders, and must bequeath goods and land to their children, dividing them equally among the consanguine children, with perhaps a certain amount extra for the oldest son.

With regard to siblings and more distant kin, however, relations are rather casual and obligations few. Although residence tends to be virilocal among the Amhara, descent is bilateral. Except for a small number of royal and aristocratic families, therefore, there are no obligations with respect to corporate lineages. The absence of formal structure in extended kin relations is

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder



[617] [1...] 611 423 ...ents decisions that come down from the meketel warada or warada.[12] Incumbency tends to rotate among the senior ristenas of the parish. Amhara trace genealogies ambilineally to the original recipients of primary land rights (rist) to local fields. Ambilineages are traced from these apical ancestory through those descendants (ristenas) who have made effective claims to the fields of the original estates. Over time, it is the genealogical links associated with land claims which tend to be [582] remembered, to the exclusion of other descent ties. Similarly, it is these links which are examined most carefully in deciding whether a proposed marriage would be properly exogamous (i.e., ideally excluding descendants of the sixth ascending generation).[13]

*793 From the perspective of the Amhara peasant, the ecclesiastical organization of Begemder consists of two levels, the bishopric (located in Gondar, the provincial

[12] A feresena, rural policeman, is also a resident farmer of the parish.

[13] Hoben (1963:116-117) considers these matters in detail, and notes that occasionally the boundaries of exogamous unions are contracted to include the descendants of the fifth and even fourth ascending generations.